

GEOSCIENCE NEWSLETTER

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FIELD CONFERENCE FOR CHURCH ADMINISTRATORS, AUGUST 2006



Participants in a previous Field Conference enjoy an outdoor lunch.

The Geoscience Research Institute is hosting a Field Conference for Church Administrators, August 20-31. The trip will begin and end in Denver, Colorado, and will include numerous lectures and a bus tour. The tour will take the group to several sites of geological interest in Colorado and Utah. If you are interested in participating in this tour, please contact us at colorado@grisda.org.



Red Rocks Amphitheater, west Denver. Tilted layers of the Fountain Formation are sand and conglomerate deposited from erosion of the ancestral Rocky Mountains.

Among the sites the group will visit is the Hanging Lake area, Glenwood Canyon, pictured on the right. An unconformity occurs between the lower Ordovician Manitou Formation and the upper Devonian Chaffee Group.

The Silurian period, supposedly 25 million years long, is missing between them, although no evidence is found here for major erosion in the lower layer. The lack of erosion at gaps representing long periods of time is one of the arguments used to support a short chronology.



Hanging Lake area, Glenwood Canyon. There is no evidence of the 25 million years claimed for the Silurian period.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN IN THE NEWS

The recent court case involving mention of intelligent design in public school classrooms in Pennsylvania is an American phenomenon, but could have a far-reaching influence. Some of the considerable discussion of this issue is represented in the following series of summaries of articles selected from the News section of our website at <http://www.grisda.org/links/WHATS-NEW.htm>. A commentary follows the summaries of the articles.

Marshall Berman. 2005. Intelligent Design: The new creationism threatens all of science and society. American Physical Society News, October 2005. <http://www.aps.org/apsnews/1005/100518.cfm>

Summary. Berman is alarmed at the prevalence of creationary thinking among people in the United States. Berman thinks belief in creation poses two major threats to the culture of the United States. The first threat is scientific literacy. This illiteracy in science is so serious it is hindering our competitive strength in science and technology.

The second perceived threat is to personal freedom. The proponents of intelligent design have plans that go far beyond inclusion of creationism in the classroom. They wish to change how science is done, and to permeate society with theistic thinking. Berman worries this would take us back to the pre-Enlightenment, church-dominated Dark Ages, and perhaps threaten secular democracy itself.

Congressman Rush Holt (Democrat, New Jersey). 2005. Intelligent design: It's not even wrong. <http://houseoflabor.tpmcafe.com/story/2005/9/8/183216/1039>

Summary. Congressman Holt, who holds a PhD in physics, opposes inclusion of intelligent design in science classes. According to Holt, "If a question cannot be framed so that the answer is testable by looking at physical evidence and by allowing other people to repeat and replicate one's test, then it is not science."

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Holt believes intelligent design cannot be tested, and makes no predictions. He quotes physicist W. Pauli, who stated such theories are “not even wrong.” They are a matter of faith, and are beyond the realm of science.

Holt goes further: Intelligent design is lazy thinking, while science brings order and balance to our lives, and helps create progress. Lack of critical thinking weakens our global competitiveness, and intelligent design threatens to make the situation worse.

George Neumayr. 2005. The origin of speciousness. The American Spectator. Nov 18, 2005. http://www.spectator.org/dsp_article.asp?art_id=9045

Summary. Darwinists sense they have very little support for a materialistic view of the origin of life, and so they have resorted to claiming that Darwinism is compatible with religion in order to save their power. This claim runs counter to the thinking of those who know Darwin’s theory best, such as Edward O. Wilson.

Darwin rejected Christianity as a “damnable doctrine,” and his theory of natural selection excludes God as a cause in nature. Attempting to combine the theory of evolution with God’s activity, an idea known as theistic evolution, is a logical contradiction, such as a “square circle.”

Those who attempt to incorporate Darwinism into Christian faith are producing a theology of a powerless and mindless God. For example, one scholar has written that “randomness is a key feature of the mind of God.” Neumayr believes such ideas are too high a price to pay to rescue a theory that is atheistic by nature.

Douglas Kern. 2005. Why intelligent design is going to win. Tech Central Station. October 7, 2005. <http://www.techcentralstation.com/100705C.html>

Summary. Kern believes intelligent design (ID) will replace Darwinism as the standard explanation for human origins. One reason for this is that intelligent design has greater theoretical

flexibility than Darwinism. Any evidence of design is fatal to Darwinism, while evidence of natural processes is easily incorporated by intelligent design. Believers in ID can simply ask who designed the processes of nature.

Another reason ID will win is because the Darwinists are acting like losers. Their response is often mere name-calling, with reactions based on emotion rather than reason, presented with arrogance and disdain, and failing to address the substance of the debate.

Social factors, such as growth of conservative thinking and development of information theory will also enhance the success of intelligent design.

Regardless of whether it is true or not, in the end, intelligent design will defeat Darwinism.

L. James Gibson. Comment: Should We Hope that Intelligent Design Wins?

It seems plausible that Intelligent Design (ID) could indeed become dominant, with implications for public education, the public attitude toward science, and western culture in general. How should we feel about this?

Would ID destroy science? No. Science was founded by people who believed in ID. It can reasonably be argued that belief in God made science possible, not impossible. It is not credible to claim that acceptance of intelligent design *per se* would harm science.

Would acceptance of ID harm personal freedoms? No. Christians accept ID, and with it the idea of accountability to a Creator who created all humans equal and free. This concept forms the basis for the recognition of universal human rights.

The threat to science or to freedom comes, not from ID, but from those who wish to restrict thinking to agree with their own, whether IDers or atheists.

Previous Newsletters Available on the Web

Previous GRI Newsletters can be accessed on the web at: <http://www.grisda.org/resources.htm>

THE GREATEST “LANDSLIDE” OF ALL

Beutner EC, Gerbi GP. 2005. Catastrophic emplacement of the Heart Mountain block slide, Wyoming and Montana, USA. GSA Bulletin 117(5/6):724-735.



Heart Mountain, seen from Highway 120, just north of Cody, Wyoming.

Summary. A massive block of sediments over 1500 km² broke loose from its original site near the north-eastern corner of Yellowstone National Park and slid some 25-50 km to the southeast. The block consisted of about 500 m of Paleozoic sediments, capped with Tertiary volcanic rocks. As it slid, the main block broke into several separate pieces and spread out over an area of 3500 km². The best known of the blocks is probably Heart Mountain, pictured above.

Much of the sliding surface had a very gentle slope of only about 2 degrees, and geologists have long wondered how the block could slide such a distance. Evidence suggests that a volcanic explosion caused a large block of rock to break away along a steeply sloping fault. As the block moved, friction against the underlying carbonate surface produced a layer of supercritical carbon dioxide, which reduced friction, enabling the block to slide rapidly, perhaps at a rate greater than 100 km/hr.

Eventually, the block encountered a rising slope, and stopped. The entire episode may have lasted only a few tens of minutes.

Comment. The massive scale of the slide is a reminder of the power hidden within the earth, and the catastrophic history of our planet.